

UNION OF THE BALTIC CITIES REPORT OF THE XI GENERAL CONFERENCE

INTRODUCTION

The XI General Conference of the Union of the Baltic Cities was held on 5-6 October 2011 in Liepāja, Latvia, at the invitation of Uldis Sesks, Mayor of Liepāja. In Liepāja the UBC celebrated 20 years anniversary of its foundation in Gdańsk on 20 September 1991.

The first day of the conference was entitled: “Building on the past, heading for the future”. The first plenary session brought an outlook on what happened in the Baltic Sea area during the last 20 years, from the cold war to the era of extensive cooperation, and what can happen during the next 10-20 years. The second plenary session highlighted the cities’ role, their expectations, interests, etc.

The second conference day started with the meetings of the commissions followed by three workshops covering crucial issues our societies are facing: cities’ economic attractiveness, climate change, ageing society. The second day was also devoted to the internal UBC matters such as reports, elections, finances, etc. The conference programme is enclosed with the report.

The General Conference emphasized the role of Anders Engström, the former Mayor of Kalmar, in creation and development of the Union of the Baltic Cities. He served as the UBC President in the years 1991-2001. Mr Engström was not able to attend the jubilee General Conference in Liepāja due to health problems.

The conference was attended by 213 participants including representatives of 76 Member Cities as well as invited guests from governments and international organisations. The conference programme and list of participants are enclosed with the report.

WEDNESDAY, 5 OCTOBER 2011

OPENING

Uldis Sesks, the Mayor of Liepāja, warmly welcomed all participants at the XI UBC General Conference in Liepāja.

Gunārs Anšņš, the Vice-Mayor of Liepāja, made a presentation introducing the city of Liepāja.

Per Bødker Andersen, the President of the Union of the Baltic Cities, opened the XI UBC General Conference.

Raimonds Vējonis, the Latvian Minister for Regional Development and Environmental Protection welcomed the participants on behalf of the government of Latvia.

PLENARY SESSIONS

The first day of the conference was moderated by Uldis Grava, the former member of the Latvian Parliament (Saeima) and the former Director General of Latvian Public Television.

The following speakers delivered keynote speeches during the first plenary session:

Introduction

- EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea region: A New Framework for Joint Action
Catharina Sørensen, PhD, European Commission, Directorate General for Regional Policy
- Baltic Sea Region: From Cold War to Arena of Cooperation
H.E. Jerzy Marek Nowakowski, Ambassador Extraordinary of the Republic of Poland to the Republic of Latvia
- Challenges and possibilities for economic cooperation in the BSR
Martti Kohtanen, CEO of Siemens Finland, Strategic Business Partner of Baltic Development Forum
- Future prospects for Baltic Sea Cooperation
Igor Lonsky, Deputy Chairman of the Committee for External Relations of St. Petersburg, Head of International Cooperation Department

The following speakers delivered keynote speeches during the second plenary session:

- How can culture support city development?
Marie-Louise Rönmark, Mayor of Umeå, 1st Vice-President of UBC
- How can we be relevant for smaller cities?
Urve Tiidus, former Mayor of Kuressaare, UBC Vice-President, Member of the Parliament of Estonia
- How to involve young people more in the UBC work?
Pavels Jurs, Director of Liepāja Youth Centre
- On the implementation of the UBC Strategy
Mikko Lohikoski, Director for External Affairs of Turku, UBC Strategy Coordinator
- Nature Concert Hall Idea
Silvija Nora Kalnins, Nature Concert Hall Board Chair

The keynote speeches are enclosed with the report.

THURSDAY, 6 OCTOBER 2011

COMMISSIONS' MEETINGS

The Commissions held working meetings in order to discuss action plans for the next two-year period.

CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS

The following three conference workshops were held in parallel:

I. How to strengthen economic attractiveness of cities?

Moderator: Commission on Business Cooperation

II. How to master climate change? Success factors in local integrated climate management

Moderator: Commission on Environment

III. How to meet the demographic challenge? The ageing society

Moderator: Commission on Health & Social Affairs

The workshops' summaries are enclosed with the conference report.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The General Assembly was opened by Per Bødker Andersen, the President of the Union.

REPORT ON UBC ACTIVITIES

President Per Bødker Andersen highlighted major milestones in 20 years history of the Union of the Baltic Cities. President Andersen's speech as well as report on UBC activities October 2009 – September 2011 are enclosed with this report.

AUDITOR'S REPORT

Paweł Żaboklicki, UBC Secretary General, informed the General Conference that the audit of UBC accounts for 2009 and 2010 had been performed by the licensed auditing company Bilans from Gdańsk. The report states that the Union financial transactions and records within the mentioned period have been handled properly. The Conference took note of the report. The auditor's report is enclosed.

BOARD OF AUDIT REPORT

Marta Chełkowska, Head of Tourism Department, Marshal Office of Pomorskie Voivodeship, presented the report and recommendations of the Board of Audit. The General Conference took note of the report. The report of the Board of Audit is enclosed.

ABSOLVING THE BOARD, PRESIDIUM, SECRETARY

The General Conference acknowledged the fulfilment of duties by the Executive Board, Presidium, Secretary General in 2009 and 2010.

MEMBERSHIP FEES 2012-2013

Secretary General Paweł Żaboklicki presented the Executive Board's proposal of the membership fees for 2012 and 2013. The General Conference approved the membership fees for the financial period 2012-2013. The financial documents are enclosed with the report.

ELECTION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

The following cities were elected as members of UBC Executive Board in the next two-year period: Næstved (Denmark), Keila (Estonia), Jyväskylä (Finland), Rostock (Germany), Liepāja (Latvia), Šiauliai (Lithuania), Kristiansand (Norway), Gdańsk (Poland), St. Petersburg (Russia), Växjö (Sweden).

ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT AND VICE-PRESIDENTS

The General Conference elected for a two-year period:

Per Bødker Andersen, the Deputy Mayor of Kolding, as President of the Union

Marie-Louise Rönmark, the Mayor of Umeå, as first Vice-President of the Union

Jarkko Virtanen, the Deputy Mayor of Turku, as Vice-President of the Union

Andres Jaadla, the Mayor of Rakvere, as Vice-President of the Union

ELECTION OF THE BOARD OF AUDIT

The General Conference re-elected Ewa Back, Marta Chełkowska and Jukka Vilen to the UBC Board of Audit for a two-year period.

SECRETARIAT

Following the proposal of the Mayor of the City of Gdańsk, Paweł Adamowicz, the General Conference decided to maintain the UBC Secretariat in the City of Gdańsk, for the next four-year period.

AUDITOR FOR 2011-2012

The President informed the Conference that the Executive Board proposed the licensed auditing company Bilans from Gdańsk as the UBC auditor for 2011-2012. The General Conference approved

Bilans as the UBC auditor for 2011-2012.

COMMISSION ON LOCAL SAFETY

At the 61st UBC Executive Board meeting in Karlstad, 17 June 2011, fifteen UBC member cities applied to the Board to transform the working group on local safety into the commission. The Board accepted the proposal. The General Conference approved the creation of the UBC Commission on Local Safety.

VENUE OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE IN 2013

Following the proposal of the Mayor of Mariehamn, Finland, the General Conference decided to hold its 12th gathering in the city of Mariehamn in 2013. Gunārs Anšņš, the Deputy Mayor of Liepāja, handed over the UBC flag to Edgar Vickström, the Mayor of Mariehamn, wishing Mariehamn a successful conference in 2013.

CULTURE AWARD

The UBC Cultural Prize 2011 “Building Bridges for the Baltic Future” was shared between the city of Visby for Medieval Week on Gotland and the city of Rakvere for Punk Song Festival. The evaluation of the applications is enclosed.

SEMINARS

In parallel with the General Conference the following seminars have been held:

- Youth Seminar titled ”Your lifestyle, your choice for happy life in our world”
- Seminar “Success stories of local climate change work in the BSR”
- two Seminars on UBC Communication & Marketing Strategy

CLOSING OF THE CONFERENCE

Per Bødker Andersen, the President of the Union, expressed his warm thanks to the City of Liepāja, delegates from member cities, speakers, guests and the UBC secretariat for their outstanding contribution to the success of the XI UBC General Conference.